

the people of Northern Ireland who want an enduring peace and a normal life, I call upon all those involved to find the way to get the peace process back on track. I am ready to assist Prime Minister Blair, Prime Minister Ahern, and the parties in any way I can to achieve this goal.

Memorandum on Occupational Illness Compensation for Energy Contractor Personnel

July 15, 1999

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Energy, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Assistant to the President for Economic Policy

Subject: Occupational Illness Compensation for Energy Contractor Personnel

Contractor personnel working for the Department of Energy (DOE) and its predecessor agencies helped our Nation win the Cold War but often faced dangerous working conditions. A small number of them were exposed to beryllium, a metal used in the production of weapons, and subsequently contracted chronic beryllium disease (CBD), a debilitating lung disease for which there is no cure. Most of those exposed worked under contract for the DOE and are not covered by the Federal workers' compensation program. As a result many of those with CBD have not received the occupational illness benefits otherwise available to regular Federal employees.

Today, I am pleased to announce that my Administration will submit draft legislation to the Congress that would create a new program to give DOE contractor employees with CBD and beryllium sensitivity the same benefits—certain medical costs and lost wages—now available to Federal employees. The American people believe in fairness, and I am sure that they would find it fair to provide this reasonable compensation to this small group of people who contributed so much to their country's well-being and who now are suffering from this incurable disease.

Under my draft legislation, the Department of Labor would administer a program similar to the Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA) program, which currently

provides Federal workers a proportion of lost wages, medical costs, rehabilitation, and training. My draft legislation also would compensate workers whose beryllium sensitivity forced them into lower-paying jobs. As with all workers' compensation systems, the program will serve as an "exclusive remedy," barring individuals with work-related illness claims from bringing litigation against the Federal Government.

Recognizing that other toxic and radioactive materials also may contribute to occupational illnesses, I direct you to participate in an interagency review led by the National Economic Council focusing on whether there are other illnesses that warrant inclusion in this program and how this should be accomplished. This interagency review should be completed by March 31, 2000.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Statement on Senate Action on Patients' Bill of Rights Legislation

July 15, 1999

Tonight's party line vote for a weak, unenforceable Patients' Bill of Rights is the wrong course for America. The Republican leadership's bill is a Patients' Bill of Rights in name only.

It fails to protect more than 110 million Americans—including the vast majority of Americans in HMO's. For those it does cover, this bill fails to ensure patients' access to the specialists they need; fails to ensure patients the rights to keep their doctors throughout a course, a treatment; fails to prevent insurance company accountants from making final calls on medical decisions; and it fails to hold health plans accountable for actions that harm their patients.

If Congress insists on passing such an empty promise to the American people, I will not sign the bill. Passing a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights should not be a partisan issue. This should be about protecting patients, not insurance companies.

We will not stop working on this critical issue until we provide patients the protections they need. The American people know the difference between a good and bad bill.